

SHIR CONNECTION: The Power of Intergenerational Togetherness



Shir Connection participants continue the conversation over lunch.

Zamir was fortunate to receive a Covenant Grant which allowed us to pilot *Shir Connection*, a new way of using our music-as-text-study model to engage an intergenerational audience. We welcomed 122 participants - 80 seniors and 42 teens - spanning 19 states and Israel, with adults ranging in age from 61-99.

Using music as a catalyst for conversation, we created a space for real community across the generations. "*Shir Connection* gave me a feeling of belonging that has been missing in my life," shared an adult participant.



In each session, a piece of music was the foundation for investigation of a Jewish value. Intergenerational pods dove into rich dialogue guided by a set of prompts and facilitated by HaZamir alumni. Participants seized the opportunity that prompts provided to share openly with one another, providing glimpses into their lives and histories. Participants created space for each other's stories to shine through. They discovered similarities, explored differences, and came to really see and understand each other's lives.

In the words of a teen, "*Shir Connection* means learning from and listening to each other." Sometimes the

"other" a teen connected with was, in fact, their own grandparent or grandfriend. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to connect with my grandson on this level," reflected a Brooklyn grandmother. "My grandma and I had an amazing conversation after today's session," wrote a HaZamir singer. "We couldn't stop talking about Im Ein Ani Li. That particular piece sparked an emotional conversation about responsibility and its role in the lives of teens and adults - caring for aging parents, navigating the social pressures of adolescence, feeling a burden to leave the world in good shape for future generations, feeling the burden of being that future generation.

Beautifully, the relationships sparked by *Shir Connection* have continued long beyond the Zoom screen. Pen pals, *Shabbat Shalom* phone calls, pod reunions on Zoom, and meet-ups to respond to current events have all shown the enduring power of this community. In a written reflection on the *Shir Connection* experience, an adult participant wrote: "Isolation engulfs us, fragments us, defeats us. Then, the music and singing pierce the silence. They overtake solitude; they lay a common path. Texts of our tradition prompt us. We begin to think. The Zoom room opens. We feel the warm virtual embrace of quickly familiar faces. Mere connection? Sheer connection. **Shir Connection!**"

SPECIAL ADDENDUM:

Providing Connection as we Meet This Moment

Our commitment to unequivocal Zionism and to building bridges between American and Israeli singers is more important than ever. HaZamir is meeting this moment by nurturing the connections between American and Israeli teens, providing trauma-informed programming and processing,

and ensuring a safe space in which young people can feel and express fierce Jewish pride. The repertoire HaZamir chapters are rehearsing in both countries reflects this current moment.

We may be separated by an ocean, but HaZamir is one united community. Each week since

October 7th, our American HaZamirnikim have written *Shabbat Shalom* and *Shavuah Tov* notes to our HaZamir Israel family, particularly to recent alumni serving bravely in the IDF. The notes have sparked meaningful conversation and, as Guy, a HaZamir alumnus from Ashkelon says "give strength."

